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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [UN](#) [ER](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: GNU RELATIONS WITH ERITREA AND UNMIS

Classified By: Pol/Econ Chief Eric Whitaker, Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: In an April 13 meeting, Deputy National Congress Party External Relations Officer, Dr. Hassan Haj Ali, told Poloff that the Sudanese government had no official objection to Asmara hosting GNU-Eastern Front negotiations, provided that the bilateral relationship with Eritrea is normalized. He added that the Eritreans had selected an ambassador designate to Sudan; however, the GNU had yet to select its counterpart to Eritrea. According to UN Political Officer Judith Goetz, on April 12, UN SRSG Pronk met with Assistant to the President Nafie Ali Nafie to clarify UNMIS operations in the East. Goetz said that in the meeting, Nafie told Pronk that Asmara could be a possible venue for GNU-Eastern Front negotiations. End Summary.

#### Eritrea and Sudan Relations -----

12. (C) On April 13, Poloff spoke with Deputy National Congress Party (NCP) External Relations Officer Dr. Hassan Haj Ali about the relationship between Sudan and Eritrea and prospects for Eastern Front negotiations in Asmara. Dr. Hassan, originally from Gedaref in Eastern Sudan, is the deputy for Kamal Obied, the NCP Chairman for the GNU & East Committee.<sup>8</sup> Dr. Hassan said Asmara had nominated Essa Mohamed Essa as ambassador to Sudan; however, his credentials have not yet been presented to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He added that the GNU had not yet designated its ambassador to Eritrea. According to Dr. Hassan, the Sudanese government does not have any official objections<sup>8</sup> to Asmara hosting GNU-Eastern Front negotiations, provided a normalization of relations between the two countries occurs prior to negotiations. Dr. Hassan said that on April 12 and 13, an Eritrean delegation of Abdallah Jabir, Yemane Gabreab, and ambassador-designee Essa Mohamed Essa met with MFA Under Secretary Mutriff Saddig, SPLM National Assembly Chair Yassir

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Arman, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Lam Akol to discuss normalizing relations.

13. (SBU) Dr. Hassan highlighted the GNU's recently created & East Development Program,<sup>8</sup> which he said will introduce basic infrastructure, such as roads, water, and electricity to the East. He added that GNU was currently searching for contractors to bid on the development projects.

14. (C) On April 14, following a meeting with the Eritrean delegation, Yassir Arman confirmed to PolChief that the GNU and Eritrea had formally agreed to Asmara's hosting GNU-Eastern Front negotiations and exchanging ambassadors. However, Arman said that the GNU and Eritrean delegation were unable to agree to the inclusion of Eritrea in the Abuja peace talks on Darfur and to re-open their borders to the

passage of goods and persons.

Pronk and Nafie Discuss UNMIS in East

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15. (C) On April 12, after two months of requests for a meeting, UN SRSG Pronk met with Assistant to the President Nafie Ali Nafie to discuss a variety of issues, including the situation in Eastern Sudan. UN Political Officer Judith Goetz told Poloff that Nafie said that Asmara was a possible venue for GNU-Eastern Front negotiations; however, no concrete agreement took place. In discussions with Nafie, Goetz added that Pronk discussed the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), a bilateral agreement between the Sudanese government and UNMIS that allows access for humanitarian assistance without obstruction or impediments. Goetz said, according to the government, the SOFA only applies to the UNMIS mission and not other UN agencies. Pronk told Nafie that the SOFA agreement applied to all UN agencies under the control of UNMIS, regardless of the date of the establishment of the agency's arrival in Sudan. According to Goetz, Nafie said that he was unaware of a problem with the SOFA, but commented that this problem was the result of local people protesting the presence of the UN in the East.

STEINFELD